



WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

8 December 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: General Lemnitzer
Admiral Gardner
General Partridge
General Everest

Subject: Timing of Allied Use of Force to Determine Soviet Intentions Relative to a Possible Blockade of Berlin.

1. The Planning Board of the NSC gave much study to the question of proper timing of the use of military force in an attempt to lift a possible Berlin blockade or clearly establish Soviet intentions with respect to Berlin.

2. It was generally conceded that in the face of Soviet ground superiority in the area, an attempt to force passage into or out of Berlin which was fully opposed by Soviet armed action would be doomed to failure. It was further conceded that any considerable deployment of SACUR forces to forward areas for the purpose of making such an attempt would result in maldeployment to meet a Soviet attack launched at Western Europe while SACUR forces were in forward areas. It was further conceded that a defeat of Allied (U.S.) troops in an effort to force the blockade would result in a situation in which the Allies would have no recourse other than to resort to general war.

3. Cognizance was taken of the relative war readiness of the Allies and the Soviet Bloc. It was recognized that the Allies were not in an adequate mobilization posture to risk triggering general war without considerable further preparation. Redeployments of troops from the Far East, an increased production base, and the mobilization of reserve forces were all steps that should be undertaken before war was actually engaged.

4. Cognizance was taken of the Berlin stockpile, the existence of which is only justified as a time saving device.

3. Cognizance was taken of the fact that, regardless of provocation, many members of the UN and the Free World would consider the first nation resorting to armed force the aggressor and accordingly military action by the Allies would imperil UN and Free World support of their position if general war developed.

6. Based on the above certain decisions were agreed to by the Planning Board:

5. The use of force should be limited to a small number of troops whose deployment would not risk SACEUR's primary mission.

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b. When it became evident that Soviet harassing measures were in effect intended to blockade access to Berlin the Allies would start mobilizing for a show down.

c. Time purchased by the Berlin stockpile would be used for such mobilization.

d. The use of force to lift the Berlin blockade would be resorted to only when the Allies were mentally prepared to accept general war if the use of force failed.

7. It is believed that an earlier use of force than that recommended by the Planning Board runs the grave risk of plunging the Allies into World War III without availing themselves of the opportunity to improve their war readiness by utilizing the time bought with the Berlin stockpile. It is further believed that neither France, the U.K., nor West Germany would agree to taking such a risk, and that unilateral U.S. action in this case would be impossible.

RECOMMENDATION

8. That the policy recommended by the Planning Board be approved rather than that proposed in J.C.S. 1907/101.

JOHN K. GETHART
Major General, USAF
Special Assistant to the
JCS for NSC Affairs

Copy for: Admiral Radford

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